

YAWKEY FOUNDATION
990 WASHINGTON STREET – SUITE 315
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02026

September 8, 2017

Dear Friend of the Yawkey Foundations,

Recent headlines in the Boston Globe reflect the efforts of some to change the name of Yawkey Way at Fenway Park. In justifying their objectives, proponents of the name change have led a campaign marked by factually inaccurate statements about the lives and beliefs of Tom and Jean Yawkey. I feel compelled, as someone who knew and worked with Tom and Jean, and as the Chairman of the charitable foundations they established, to speak on their behalf, because they cannot speak for themselves.

Tom Yawkey was a decent and caring person. He was a Yale-educated engineer with a good business sense. He also was a very private person who did not seek the limelight. I first met him in 1970 while working for the American League office in Boston, and then grew to know him when he hired me to work in the Treasurer's office at Fenway Park in 1973. He was an unassuming person who would often come sit in my office and talk about baseball, the business interests of the team and my family.

Tom truly loved the game of baseball, and from 1933 until his death in 1976 he took a personal interest in the well-being of every player who wore a Red Sox uniform. We will never change the regrettable fact that the Red Sox were the last team in Major League Baseball to field an African American player, but unfounded speculation on why that happened has been malicious and baseless. I was not there in the 1950's, but I was working with Tom when players such as Jim Rice, Luis Tiant, and Reggie Smith were playing for the Red Sox. In a Boston Globe article dated April 17, 1986, Will McDonough stated, "...when I asked (Dick) O'Connell about the racism and Yawkey, he told me, 'It was just the opposite. In meetings, he (Yawkey) would ask me why we didn't have more black ballplayers'."

I witnessed Tom's daily interactions with players on and off the field. To a person, Tom treated every player the same, regardless of their race. He took an interest in their families, and their personal lives, making sure they had the support they needed, especially in times of difficulty. The Baseball Hall of Fame describes Tom by stating, "Beyond the Red Sox's fortunes on the field, Yawkey was tremendously popular in Boston for his generosity. To players like (Ted) Williams, Yawkey was more than a savior for the franchise; he was a beloved grandfather-like figure."

Several articles and editorials have suggested that on the day in April, 1945 when Jackie Robinson tried out at Fenway Park, Tom Yawkey was in the stands and yelled an inappropriate statement. In fact, Tom Yawkey was not in Boston that day. It was Tom and Jean's custom to come to Boston in May, after the baseball season was underway. I remember speaking with Jean Yawkey about the Jackie Robinson story after Tom's death, and she told me that Tom wasn't in

the ballpark on the day of the try-out. The Boston Globe also reported that Tom was not in Boston. The story, which has been resurrected in recent articles, is just not true.

Tom not only loved the game of baseball, but also was a great outdoorsman who loved to hunt and fish. Over the last several weeks articles have stated that he was a “southern plantation owner,” implying all of the negative connotations that go with that description. It is a false and very misleading characterization. The truth is that Tom grew up in New York City and attended schools in the northeast. When he was 16 years old he inherited a partial ownership share in a game reserve in Georgetown, South Carolina from his uncle William, who had purchased the share in 1914. It was a place where Tom would hunt and fish as a young boy. In 1925, Tom bought out the other owners of the game reserve and proceeded to acquire surrounding properties for the purpose of preserving the land as a wildlife refuge. That property--which grew to include 24,000 acres of pine forests, ponds and miles of undeveloped shoreline--was gifted by Tom to the state of South Carolina at the time of his death, with the goal of preserving the property from future development. In his Will, Tom established the Yawkey Foundation with funds to preserve and maintain this wildlife refuge in perpetuity. In any other context, Tom Yawkey would be applauded for the foresight and interest in preserving this important natural resource.

Like Tom, Jean was a very private person who grew up on Long Island and did not seek public notoriety. She married Tom in 1944, and they lived their lives between New York, Boston and the wildlife preserve in South Carolina. They shared his love of baseball, a disdain for public accolades and a common desire to use the wealth at their disposal to help others less fortunate. Tom and Jean knew Dr. Sidney Farber at Boston Children’s Hospital, and starting in 1953, they supported his work and the work of the Jimmy Fund—work that continues to this day at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. In Georgetown, SC, a poor coastal community where the majority of the population is African American, the Yawkeys funded the construction of the only hospital. They also provided major support for the establishment of Tara Hall Home for Boys. And they helped hundreds of individuals in times of need by paying hospital bills, paying tuitions, and helping lift the burdens off those who were disadvantaged.

I knew Jean for over 20 years. Like Tom, she took an interest not only in the game but also in the players who wore the Red Sox uniform. She was one of the early women owners in baseball and was active in the operation of the Red Sox after Tom’s death. She supported Boston charities such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston, Rosie’s Place and Pine Street Inn. She funded the first refrigerated delivery truck for the Greater Boston Food Bank and supported so many other charities throughout Boston. When the Jackie Robinson exhibit toured the country in the late 80’s, Jean Yawkey sponsored the exhibit in Boston, and also paid to have thousands of Boston school children visit the exhibit and learn the Jackie Robinson story. She personally supported the Jackie Robinson Foundation scholarship program —support which her Foundation continues today.

While the Yawkeys were alive, they never allowed their name to be placed on any buildings. They consistently rejected requests for naming as well as requests for awards and honorary degrees. That was not their style. The naming of Yawkey Way was done shortly after Tom’s death in 1976. At that time, there was strong public sentiment to rename Fenway Park as

“Yawkey Field.” Jean felt that changing the name that had been given to the ballpark by the prior owners was inappropriate. She also respected the fact that the name Fenway Park was widely accepted by Red Sox fans. Jean considered that an important tradition and one that should be preserved.

An alternative was proposed to name the non-residential portion of Jersey Street as “Yawkey Way” in recognition of the 43 years of Tom’s stewardship of the Red Sox and Fenway Park. The Yawkey family was not involved, but rather, the action was taken by New England fans and public officials who knew Tom well and his philanthropic works in the city. Similarly, the Red Sox employees collected their personal funds and erected a plaque on the exterior of Fenway Park to commemorate their appreciation for the work he had done for them and for so many others.

After Tom’s death, Jean and I spent hours discussing the mission and goals of the Yawkey Foundations as a lasting legacy to continue the philanthropy that she and Tom began during their lifetimes. Those discussions shaped the mission of the Yawkey Foundations and guide the giving of the Foundations today. To date, the Yawkey Foundations have donated nearly \$450 million to charities, \$282 million of which has been given to charities in the City of Boston.

Tom and Jean were my friends and they are people I admired. The Trustees and staff of the Yawkey Foundations work every day to continue the legacy of these remarkable people. We continue to be proud to carry out the Yawkeys legacy and, consistent with their wishes, will continue to work to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and families in the communities they considered their home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John L. Harrington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J" and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

John L. Harrington, Chairman



Tom Yawkey

Thomas Austin Yawkey

Inducted to the Hall of Fame in: 1980

Primary team: Boston Red Sox

Primary position: Executive

On his 30th birthday, Tom Yawkey came into a multimillion dollar inheritance left by his late uncle. Four days later, at the advice of Hall of Famer Eddie Collins, Yawkey bought the struggling Boston Red Sox franchise.

Over the next four-plus decades, Yawkey would become as synonymous with his franchise as perhaps any owner in baseball history. Along the way, Yawkey elevated his club from cellar dwellers to perennial contenders.

When Yawkey bought the Red Sox in 1933, the team had been consistently mired in baseball's second division for more than a decade after selling the legendary Babe Ruth and many other star players to the New York Yankees. Upon assuming ownership, Yawkey emptied his pocketbook and signed some of the American League's best players – including future Hall of Famers Joe Cronin, Jimmie Foxx, Rick Ferrell, Lefty Grove and Heinie Manush. By 1938, Boston was a second-place team.

“Some men like to spend their dough on fast horses and other things that go fast,” Yawkey told writer Dan Daniel in 1937. “Some men like to go in for polo, for example, and spend thousands of dollars on ponies. Some go nuts for paintings, and give half a million for a hunk of canvas in a fancy frame. But my passion is baseball. My idea of heaven is a pennant winner. Boston would go nuts over a winner, and maybe someday we'll get all the dough back. But in the meantime, don't let anybody tell you Tom Yawkey is a sucker.”

Yawkey transferred his attention toward the minor leagues by the late 1930s, when the Red Sox purchased future All-Star prospects Bobby Doer, Ted Williams and Dom DiMaggio from the Pacific Coast League. In 1942, Yawkey's home-grown Red Sox recorded 93 wins, setting the franchise's best mark since 1915.

When Williams returned home from World War II, the Red Sox delivered Yawkey his long-desired pennant in 1946.

Beyond the Red Sox's fortunes on the field, Yawkey was tremendously popular in Boston for his generosity. To players like Williams, Yawkey was more than a savior for the franchise; he was a beloved grandfather-like figure.

“(Yawkey) had a heart as big as a watermelon,” the “Splendid Splinter” once said. “I loved the man from the bottom of my heart. He was unselfish, fair, sincere and honest.”

Yawkey established a long-lasting partnership between the Red Sox and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 1953, and set up a fund for Boston-area student athletes following the death of Red Sox player Harry Agganis in 1955. He was also a benefactor for the Hall of Fame and served on its board of directors until his death in 1976.

“I was always taught to help others; that those of us fortunate enough to be born with material abundance should do what we can for those who are not,” Yawkey said. “I do what I can.”

Under Yawkey’s leadership, the Red Sox captured additional pennants in 1967 and 1975, falling one game short of a World Series Championship in each season.

Upon his death, J.G. Taylor Spink Award winner Red Smith wrote, “(Yawkey) had little in common with other club owners, and they were mystified by him, if not downright suspicious, because he was a strange fish who was in baseball not to make a buck or feed his ego but because he happened to love the game.”

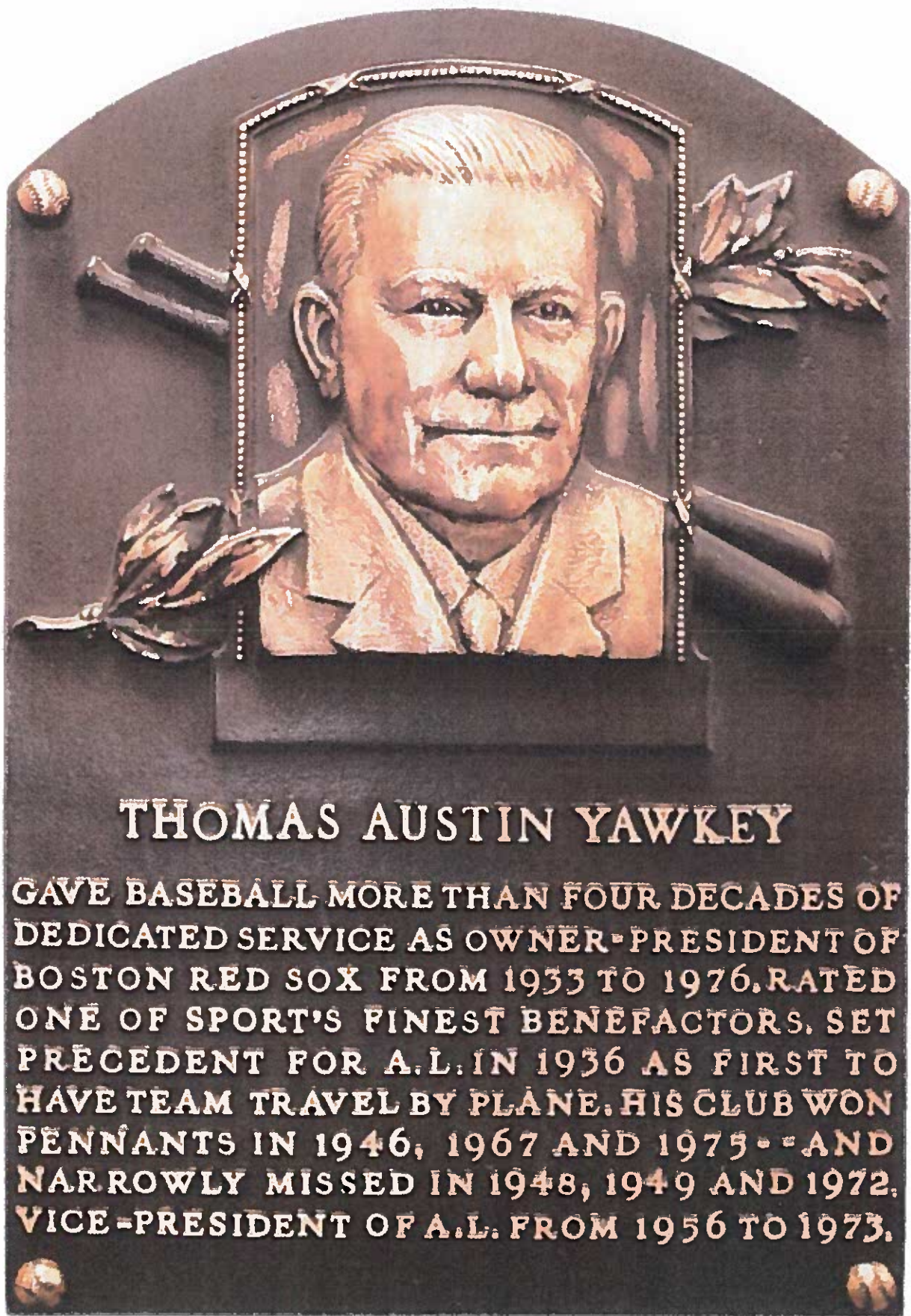
Yawkey became the fourth major league team owner to be enshrined in Cooperstown when he was inducted posthumously in 1980.

DID YOU KNOW

THAT TOM YAWKEY'S UNCLE, LATER HIS ADOPTIVE FATHER, WAS AT ONE TIME THE OWNER OF THE DETROIT TIGERS?

"He was someone I loved... Above all, he was one of the greatest sportsmen and humanitarians of this era or any era. "

- Ted Williams



THOMAS AUSTIN YAWKEY

GAVE BASEBALL MORE THAN FOUR DECADES OF DEDICATED SERVICE AS OWNER-PRESIDENT OF BOSTON RED SOX FROM 1933 TO 1976. RATED ONE OF SPORT'S FINEST BENEFACTORS. SET PRECEDENT FOR A.L. IN 1936 AS FIRST TO HAVE TEAM TRAVEL BY PLANE. HIS CLUB WON PENNANTS IN 1946, 1967 AND 1975 - - AND NARROWLY MISSED IN 1948, 1949 AND 1972. VICE-PRESIDENT OF A.L. FROM 1956 TO 1973.

HOME

ABOUT US

History of the Foundations

Yawkey Foundation I

Yawkey Foundation II

▶ Thomas A. Yawkey

Jean R Yawkey

Trustees

Chairman and President's Message

AREAS OF GIVING

GRANT GUIDELINES & ELIGIBILITY

RECENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNUAL GRANTS REPORTS

CONTACT US

Thomas A. Yawkey

Thomas Austin Yawkey was born in 1903 in Detroit, Michigan and was raised and educated in New York and Connecticut. Orphaned at a young age, Tom was left to the care of his uncle, a lumber, mining, and oil entrepreneur. Following his uncle's death, Tom inherited the considerable fortune that had been accumulated by the Yawkey family over the prior century, as well as a significant amount of land in Georgetown County, South Carolina that Tom's uncle had purchased in 1911.

A cum laude graduate of Yale University with a degree in engineering, Tom Yawkey purchased the Boston Red Sox in 1933 and married Jean R. Hollander in 1944. The Yawkeys lived in Boston and New York and spent winters in Georgetown, South Carolina. An avid outdoorsman and self-taught ornithologist, Tom carefully managed the South Carolina land through his own conservation practices, producing a pristine area reserved for waterfowl, turtles, alligators, and other wildlife.

Tom Yawkey was well known as a private and generous man who gave freely of his time and money to people and organizations in need. He often helped people directly with private gifts to support medical, college, and other expenses. Tom was active in the founding of Tara Hall Home for Boys and Georgetown Memorial Hospital in Georgetown, South Carolina. As owner of the Boston Red Sox, Tom Yawkey began quietly supporting the research of Dr. Sidney Farber and in 1953 decided to make the Dr. Farber's Children's Cancer Research Foundation, popularly known as the Jimmy Fund, the official charity of the Boston Red Sox. This support generated millions of dollars that were vitally important to the Children's Cancer Research Foundation, which became known as the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 1983.

Tom Yawkey was the Owner/President of the Boston Red Sox from 1933 to 1976 and Vice-President of the American League from 1956 to 1973. He had a long association with the Jimmy Fund and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute as a Trustee and Chair of the Board. He also was actively involved with the Tara Hall Home for Boys, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, and Georgetown Memorial Hospital. Tom has been fondly remembered by former players, employees, and friends for his personal character, intelligence, gentleness, and charity. Tom Yawkey died in 1976.

